

# LONG ISLAND FORUM



Old Turnpike (Cox) House at Old Westbury

From Bailey's Long Island History

Courtesy The Historic American Building Survey, Library of Congress

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TURTLES CARRY TALES

Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood, Contributing Editor

SOUTH BAY BULRUSHES

Julian Denton Smith, President L. I. Chapter, S. of A. R.

TALES OF MOUNT MISERY

Kate Wheeler Strong

GREENPORT IN THE EARLY 1880'S

Ralph Albertson

NEW HEMPSTEAD, N. Y.

Clarence Russell Comes

LETTERS FROM FORUM READERS

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# THE LONG ISLAND FORUM

Published Monthly at  
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FOR LONG ISLANDERS EVERYWHERE

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**PAUL BAILEY, Publisher-Editor**

*Contributing Editors*

Clarence A. Wood, LL.M., Ph.D.  
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John C. Hudon, Ph.D.

**Greenport In The Early 1880's**  
Ralph Albertson

(Mr. Albertson sent this letter to the Forum just prior to his death in Washington, D.C. Editor.)

In 1880, when I was 14 years old, I went to live with my sister Eva, Mrs. S. B. Horton, in Greenport. That was the year that the new Greenport High School was opened and I was in the first freshman class.

Greenport was very proud of this new school building which could be seen from Connecticut. I believe our Dr. Clarence Wood was a student in this building that first year, but not a member of the same class.

I have vivid memories of the Greenport of those days which had a social and economic life which ought not to be entirely forgotten. The outstanding feature of the social life of Greenport at this time was the "Greenport Literary Society". In this were united a number of the leading people of the village of whom, if I had a list, it would be too long to print and yet some of the names that I do remember may be of interest to the readers of this article.

Prof. Darwin Bardwell the principal of the new school and several if not all of the teachers were active in the society. All the ministers of the village were members; Dr. and Mrs. C. C. Miles, Dr. and Mrs. S. E. Fish were important members. Mrs. Fish had a superb soprano voice and had had some expert musical training. There were Mr. and Mrs. Grover Adams and Miss Sarah, the Misses Betsy and Susan Clark, Mr. and Mrs. S. B. Horton. Mrs. Horton had had some stories published in the Atlantic and in Scribner's and was given much honor.

There were the Townsend sisters, Mr. Willard Preston, the Taskers from the North Road, the C. H. Tuthills, Mr. and Mrs. John F. Booth, the Lyons sisters and Mr. Charles Lyons. The editors of the two newspapers, Mr. and Mrs. Flack, Dr. Skinner, Mrs. Fordham and of course many others.

Although I was too young to be

Continued on page 69

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# Turtles Carry Tales

FOR time immemorial lads roaming the countryside have frequently come upon the cautious and unobtrusive box turtle. As much or more startled than the boys, after a perisopic survey of the situation, this denizen of meadow and swamp withdraws all its appendages and submerges within its well armoured and self-contained abode.

With an ever-ready pocket-knife one just naturally carves his initials and the date into the shell of the helpless and unresisting creature. Thereafter throughout its usually long life the turtle is destined to function as does a "sandwich man", exhibiting memorabilia of the occasion and the identification of its transient acquaintance.

Years, perhaps many decades, a century or more, pass. Men and women are born, marry and die. Wars are fought, won or lost. Calamities and cataclysms occur. Time rolls its scroll into history.

On another field day the knife scrivener of an earlier time, by then perchance a little weak in limb, while touring his acres perhaps for the last time may meet again the chance acquaintance of the boy of long ago.

After a period of poignant reflection on many incidents of personal experience that have occurred during the intervening years the aged one gently replaces on the ground the passive and undemonstrative old friend that now seems a part of himself—for does it not bear his name? The two resume their wandering. The identity of the man becomes in time but a memory or a genealogical entry.

While the data which these tattooed perambulators carry during years end on end throughout rural Long Island are very meagre and not in

*Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood*

themselves very illuminating, it may be worthwhile and of some interest if one who is indigenous to the island should piece together some data collected from the backs of turtles and submit it with amplification to the lens of publicity for the edification of Forum readers.

A turtle with two dates marking a span of a century and a fifth inscribed on its housing was found at Southold



Huge Snapping Turtle, Held by Its Captor,  
Arthur L. Lucas (1939)

in July 1886. Simply to identify himself with the locale and with the subject of which he writes, your narrator draws attention to the fact that in the spring of that year he was "shanghaied" at Greenport and summarily installed as a choreboy on the farm of "Uncle" Eli W. and "Aunt Jute" (Julia Tuthill) Howell situated on the North Road at Southold.

The earlier date on the turtle's shell was 1740, 36 years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence and nearly a century and a half prior to 1886. The other date was 1860, just as the

Civil War was about to break. Appeared also the name of F. E. Fitzger or Fitzber.

This double dated turtle was found on land at Calves Neck once owned by Ezra L'Hommedieu, father of the New York State Board of Regents, later owned by "Col. Tom" (Thomas Sylvester) Lester, donor of Southold's town clock. Today it is the home-site of Supreme Court Justice L. Barron Hill.

Ezra L'Hommedieu "than whose, no name shines brighter in the history of Southold and Suffolk", as I once pointed out, was in 1740 but a boy of six (Forum Sept. 1949). Tom Lester's father was Thomas Storrs Lester, once district attorney of Suffolk County, who settled the estate of Era L'Hommedieu, his legal mentor.

Among a dozen other turtles found that day in nearby places two had been dated years before by Tom Lester.

The shell of the turtle inscribed 1740 and 1860 was crumpled both at front and rear. The earlier date and the name were both nearly worn off. One of its feet was gone. This turtle was sent to Eben Norton Horsford of Sylvester Manor on Shelter Island, who was known to be in touch with Louis Agassiz the famous naturalist at Harvard University where Horsford had formerly been a professor. Horsford was then very prominent in the development of Shelter Island. He married a granddaughter of L'Hommedieu, and after her death married her sister. Agassiz reported that it was not at all improbable that the turtle was initiated in 1740 as turtles sometimes live to the age of 300 years.

In 1874, twelve years before this evidently very old turtle was found at Southold in 1886, William Smith found on the Baldwin farm on Higbie Lane,

Babylon, a turtle bearing the date 1791. By way of associating the date 1791 with an event which has been prominently and frequently emphasized in the Forum, we repeat once more that on June 9 of that year John Howard Payne was born in New York City.

This turtle bore the names of Thomas and Edward Dow. In 1874 the date it was found by Smith, Thomas Dow who was the father-in-law of Col. Stephen Leek of Babylon, had been dead about thirty years. Hence this turtle was in 1874 at least over 83 years old.

In that same year of 1874 another turtle was found at Babylon which bore on its shell the year 1817. I am intrigued by the fact that this last mentioned turtle found in 1874 bore the name of Selah Wood, my family name. It was found on the Wood farm by Epenetus, son of Selah who had then been dead several years.

In the year 1874 I was a babe in arms at Setauket. My mother was Carrie J. Smith, a native of that old Brookhaven village, who had married my father John Oakley Wood, son of Capt. Jarvis Wood of Greenport, whaler and contemporary of John Fordham, harpoon-maker of Sag Harbor (Forum Aug. 1951). I am sadly and tragically ignorant about my mother's lineage. If my many articles in the Forum during the past eight years have aided or interested any reader with knowledge of the immediate forebears of Carrie J. Smith or of Capt. Jarvis Wood, please write me.

In 1877 a box turtle bearing the date June 15, 1815 and the initials J. D. was found at Southold. It was picked up at Woodpecker Neck on the premises of Oliver Overton. J. D. were the initials of Joshua Drake, father of Mrs. Oliver Overton.

The following year a turtle bearing the inscription A. A. 1837 was found at Ashamomoque between Southold and Greenport on the premises of

Continued on page 73

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# South Bay Bulrushes

ONE Sunday morning last winter I overheard a class of girls in church school working on the old Bible story of Moses. It was the marsh scene of Miriam caring for the baby Moses in the floating 'cradle' at the edge of the Nile. One of the girls asked the teacher, "What are bulrushes?"

The teacher's answer seemed pitiful. She had no idea about bulrushes and in making an answer meandered through botanical pastures with a bulldozer. Yet the teacher is a capable, intelligent, and sincere woman!

Since that experience I have asked sixty-two, normal, run-of-the-mill persons what they understand or identify as the Biblical bulrushes — many of the sixty-two did not even know they were being questioned. I have kept the record of the answers and that record makes the basis for this article.

Out of the sixty-two, thirty-two said cat-tails, fifteen had it plume grass, eleven indicated marsh grasses, three thought it to be sedges, and one got it exactly right.

It is interesting that twenty of my sixty-two experimented-upon people were or had been teachers in church schools. The one who gave the correct answer had been both a teacher and a superintendent.

All four of the so-called bulrushes—cat-tails, plume grass, reeds and sedges—grow right here in our own Great South Bay, and are familiar to almost all of us. They are plants of more than passing interest.

What a hearty, husky group of plants these so-called bulrushes! Hardly a disease or insect pest to bother a single one! We find the group growing throughout the temperate zones of the world and at times slipping down into the torrid zone. Travelogues and news

*Julian Denton Smith*

reels continually show these plants in the foreground or background of pictures filmed in Australia, China, Argentina, India, England and the United States. This seems to bear out the theory that any plant with a wide range of habitat has no natural enemies or its range would be definitely restricted.

Without one form or another of the rushes and sedges, *Juncus* and *Scirpus*, which

constitute considerable of the vegetation on top of our meadows, it would be a guess how long the mud islands of Great South Bay could remain in place. Sedge and rush roots have bound the islands together probably since the day the islands began to accumulate. The same is true of the near-by tidal meadows.

The roots cross, re-cross and crisscross matting the mud in much the same manner that beach grass binds sand

Continued on page 75



CAT-TAILS AND CANADA GOOSE

Woodcut by the Late Dr. Loring W. Turrell for His "Natural History of Smithtown"

## BOOKS

These items for Long Island students, libraries and collectors are now available. For particulars address the Long Island Forum.

New York Considered and Improved, 1695, published 1903 from the original MS in the British Museum. No. 199 of 400 printed copies.

American Marriage Records Before 1699, 244 large pages. Limited edition of 1926.

The American Indian, 485 pages, by A. Hyatt Verrill, 1927.

Some Indians Events of New England, two volumes, 1934 and 1941, by Allan Forbes.

The Iroquois, A Study in Cultural Evolution, by Frank Gouldsmith Speck, Bulletin 23 of the Cranbrook Institute of Science, 1945. The Old Merchants of New York City, by Walter Barrt, Clerk, 1963, 472 pages. Indexed by families.

Joshua Moore, American, by George F. Hummel. A novel of colonial and national development, 1943. Three Book Set, by Birdsall Jackson: Stories of Old Long Island, Pipe Dreams and Twilight Tales, How They Lived.

Refugees of 1776 from Long Island to Connecticut, by Mather. Biographical sketches of more than 1900 Colonial families. Members of which served the American cause.

Huntington-Babylon Town History, by Romanah Sammis. From earliest times to 1937.

When Winter Comes to Main Street, 1922. By Grant Overton, native Patchogue author.

Bailey's Long Island History in two large volumes, 1000 pages, 43 chapters, 200 illustrations. 13 separate town histories. L. I. Indians, Aviation, Agriculture, Whaling, Industries, Medicine, Banking, Churches, Geology, Archaeology and other subjects.

Manor Houses and Historic Homes of Long Island and Staten Island, Harold D. Eberlein. Also includes those of Staten Island, 318 pages, many illustrations. Handsomely bound. Limited edition, 1928.

Historic Long Island, Rufus Rockwell Wilson, 1902, 364 pages.

Journal of the Life and Religious Labors of Elias Hicks of Jericho, L. I., 1832, 451 pages. This native son of Nassau County became one of America's leading Quaker preachers.

History of the City of New York, 1880, 920 pages, illustrated. By Mary Louise Booth, born at Yaphank, daughter of the village miller. Became first editor of Harper's Bazaar.

Stony Brook Society. Edward A. Lapham, 1942, 146p.

Personal Reminiscences of Men and Things on Long Island. Daniel M. Tredwell. Two volumes. Published 1912 and 1917.

Old Southold Town's Tercentenary. Ann Hallock Currie-Bell, 1940, 161p.

Nassau County, The Netherland of the New World. Arthur L. Hodges, 1940, 82 pages. Cloth binding.

Pirates and Buccaneers of the Atlantic Coast, by E. R. Snow, in six parts, illustrated. 350 pages. First edition, 1944.

Tom Masson's Annual for 1923. An Anthology of current articles, essays, etc.

Smith Wills of New York and Long Island, 1664-1794, with genealogical and historical notes, 1898. William S. Pelletereau, editor.

The Social History of Flatbush, and Manners and Customs of the Dutch Settlers in Kings County, Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt, 1899-1882, 351p.

The Eastern District of Brooklyn. Eugene L. Armbruster, 1912 205p.

## Pamphlets by the Forum

*Long Island, Cradle of Aviation*, by Preston R. Bassett, president Nassau County Historical Society. The island's part in world aeronautics, republished from Bailey's Long Island History.

*First Train to Greenport, 1844*, by Dr. Clarence A. Wood, for more than 40 years research attorney for the Court of Appeals, at Albany.

*History of the Storms and Gales on Long Island*, by Osborn Shaw, Official Historian, Town of Brookhaven; *The Hurricane of 1938*, by Dorothy Quick, Poetess and Novelist. Limited, numbered edition. Out of print.

*History of Setauket Presbyterian Church*, by Kate W. Strong, with introduction by the Rev. Frank M. Kerr, Hempstead. Limited number edition of 200.

*The Talented Meuse Brothers*, by Jacqueline Overton, author of "Long Island's Story" and Librarian of the Children's Library, Westbury, with introduction by Harry Peters, art collector, critic, author and lecturer. Limited numbered edition of 500.

*Long Island's First Italian, 1639*, by Berne A. Pyke, former New York State Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets.

*Streamlining a County Welfare Service*, by Edwin W. Wallace, Commissioner Public Welfare, Nassau County.

*To Florida and Back from Long Island (in 29-Foot Fishing Skiff)*, by Captain Charles Sudam, Jr., off-shore fisherman extraordinary.

*Ezra L'Hommedieu, Island Statesman*, by Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood. A biographical sketch of Southold Town's famous native son, "Father of the Board of Regents".

*History of Patchogue Congregational Church*, by Frank Overton, M.D.

*The Pottery at Huntington*, by Romanah Sammis, Official Historian, Town of Huntington. For sale by Huntington Historical Society.

*The Thirteen Tribes*, by Paul Bailey. A brief account of the Long Island Indians, including origin, religion, mode of living, habits, customs, and decline. Suitable for use in Social Studies. Illustrated.

*History of the Long Island State Parks*, by Chester R. Blakefoot, Executive Secretary, Long Island State Park Commission. Republished from Bailey's Long Island History. For particulars address author, Babylon, N. Y.

*Birthplace of John Howard Payne*, by Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood, Contributing Editor Long Island Forum. A comprehensive presentation of conclusive proof that the author of "Home, Sweet Home" was born in New York City. Limited edition.

*A Small Boat Trip to Florida* (Winter of 1947-48), by Captain Charles Sudam, Jr.

*Trove Tales* from the early days of Long Island, as told by Kate W. Strong, based on records, documents and other data in her private collection, 13 Pamphlets, each one containing a number of Miss Strong's original stories, reprinted from the Long Island Forum. For particulars address Miss Kate W. Strong, The Cedars, Setauket, L. I.

*Distribution of Wild Orchids on Long Island* by Roy Latham, well known authority. Limited, numbered edition. Sold by author, Orient, L. I.

*Five Thousand Years of Relief*, by Edwin W. Wallace, Commissioner Public Welfare, Nassau County; President, New York Association of Public Welfare Officials.

*Teles of An Island and Its People*, by Dr. Clarence A. Wood. A group of seven sketches on Long Island's famous horses and horsemen of yesteryear, and other historical subjects.

*David Frothingham, Pioneer Editor*, by Nancy Boyd Willey, Official Historian, Village of Sag Harbor.

# Tales of Mount Misery

**N**O one really knows why it was first called Mt. Misery. Some say it was because a party of shipwrecked sailors landed there; others that it was named after the Mt. Misery on the Island of St. Kitts in the West Indies.

The earliest mention I find of it in the Town Records was Sept. 29th 1669. John Roe was to have a parcel of meadow at the upper end of Drowned Meadow (Port Jefferson) and the creek running on one side and Mt. Misery on the other.

In 1671 it is mentioned again. A blacksmith was very important to a Town in those days so they gave to the blacksmith Henry Brooks to induce him to settle here a home lot that had been Barker's. (This may have been Samuel Barker of Southampton, who in 1679 bought land in Georges Neck from John Biggs). They also gave Henry Brooks 5 acres in the Little Neck, 5 acres in the Old Field, 5 acres in New Town, 10 acres in the West Division, meadow on the south side of the landing place in West Meadow, meadow at Drowned Meadow, and "two holes upon the west side of Mountmisery." (What in the world did he want two holes for, will somebody please explain). The town also agreed that it would make him an "accomadation" equal to the other settlers.

My ancestor Selah Strong who came to Setauket in 1699 had a son Thomas who made his home at Mt. Misery. I do not know when he first bought land there, but I have always heard it amounted to 60 acres. When his great-granddaughter died in 1885, the family had by degrees purchased the whole of the Neck, 1350 acres.

Thomas had his own earmark for cattle when he was nineteen in 1727. Three years later he married Susannah

*Kate Wheeler Strong*

Tompson of Setauket. While I do not know when he built his house, I know exactly where he built it, for the brick cellar with its great arches and iron bars still stand under the present homestead.

Some people have wondered why he built his house in such a hole. In the day of open fires to warm the whole house, the hill behind the house which they called Pikel, cut off the winter winds. Up the sides of the hill grew trailing arbutus. My great-aunts loved that hill and wanted to call their home Mountford to offset Mt. Misery. Later Oakwood was chosen.

High up on the hill was the slave burying ground. The family burying ground was in East Setauket in those days. Everyone owned slaves and local, not family, tradition says that Thomas used to chain runaway slaves down in the cellar.

Thomas and Susannah had

ten children including one set of twins. There were nine daughters and one son. I have heard it said that in the early days it took a second wife to raise the children as the first wife usually died young. Such was not the case of either Thomas's wife or his father's wife in spite of there being 5 boys and 5 girls in each family.

Selah's wife, Abigail Terry Strong, lived to be 80 and Susannah died at 76. Both husbands died at the age of 51, of smallpox. Evidently that was considered old, in 1771. After Selah and his sister had fled to Connecticut, they asked permission of the British to return to visit their "aged" parents, then 44 and 45.

Son Selah lived at Mt. Misery for a time; later buying part of the Manor of St. George, which had belonged to his wife's great-grandfather, William Tangier Smith. Grandson Thomas also occupied this place. One day the family

Continued next page



"Oakwood," Home of Thomas S. Strong  
Sketched from old Photo by Mrs. Carol Davis Petty

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## Tales of Mt. Misery

Continued from page 67

were dining when the cry of fire was heard. The house was destroyed. I wonder if the house was struck by lightning. My father told me that the great-aunts were terribly afraid of lightning. They always got on a feather bed in a closet and no one was allowed to use a needle. Father even had to take his knife out of his pocket.

By 1796 Thomas was thinking of building a new house. His father, a State Senator, wrote him from Albany: "I would advise you to make your house 42 by 32 with a passage through the whole house 10 ft. wide. He added that there are not boards enough in Albany to load one sloop. However he had found 2000 boards and some plank about 6 miles from Albany. He had made a bargain to have them delivered in New York.

At the time this picture was taken the house had been empty for some years.

I enjoy reading the Forum very much. Mrs. P. L. Hanold, East Orange, N. J.

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HEMPSTEAD

**Letters From Our Readers**

Continued From Page 62

a member of this group my sister smuggled me into a couple of the meetings. It's not the meetings that I remembered but the atmosphere which the society created in the village by crossing denominational lines in a most pleasant way and breaking down sectarian prejudices. And the society set a high tone for the social life of the community.

One thing that those who can remember the Greenport of this period will easily recollect is the "Greenport Male Quartette". There have been others of course, but these four men made the best Male

three sources: The menhaden fisheries, boatbuilding, and summer vacationing.

The steam ferryboat (Capt. Isaac Rieves) ran a triangular course, for both the Manhansett and Prospect houses were flourishing. The Manhansett House on Shelter Island was one of the finest and most expensive hotels ever built in Suffolk County. It was destroyed, like many others by fire. Much business came to Greenport from Shelter Island. In the winter time the steam ferryboat was laid up and service was maintained by sailboats, a Captain Preston and Captain Jennings sailed these boats.

One of the chief money crops of eastern Long Island farms was

At one time the steamboat made connections for Boston at Stonington.

We still had at this time a New York night-boat which went also to Sag Harbor. The largest shipyard was as now at the foot of Carpenter Street. It was owned by Smith and Terry. New schooners and yachts were built there in my time but the big business was of course hauling out and overhauling. There was a big sail-loft on Main Street and a small foundry. At Sam Hedges' shop they could make anything or mend it.

There was a small ways and yard at the foot of Central Avenue on the north side of Tuthill's wharf. There was a very smart and active boat building concern, the Jacksons, at the basin north of this shipyard and John Albertson had a busy small boatshop down on Front Street. All this made boatbuilding and repairing an important industry in Greenport and in addition to this there were untold numbers of small sailboats and rowboats built in private shops and in back yards throughout the village. That was long before the great splurge of lifeboat building that followed the sinking of the Titanic in 1914.

In the early eighties a large source of business for Greenport was the menhaden fisheries. Greenport men engaged in this business included such names as Frank Price, George F. Tuthill, Morrison Rayner and others.

A large number of fishermen, sailors, "Captains" and potential captains lived in Greenport the year-round on this seasonal occupation. Thus there were firms such as Hawkins Bros. of Jamesport and Ellsworth Tuthill of Mattituck who made Greenport their docking headquarters and such others as the Tallmadges from the Maine coast who made much use of the Greenport docks and facilities. This was indeed a considerable industry.

The fish "factories" were located at distant points, for obvious reasons. The nearest was one on the eastern side of Shelter Island and the furthest was Barren Island on Jamaica Bay, both owned by Hawkins Brothers. Several were located on the south shore of Gardiners Bay, far from sensitive human populations. I knew scores of men in this business, which has now been taken over by Standard Oil and is no longer a source of livelihood to Long Island people.

I would like to mention a few other names of those who were active in Greenport affairs in this period. There were, of course Grover Adams of the First National Bank, Mr. Phillips of the Second National Bank, and Charles Wright, proprietor of the Hotel Wyandanch.

Hazard and Leander Young kept livery stables. Seth Horton had

Continued on next page



Bunker Fishing Near Greenport  
From Photos by Dr. Josiah C. Case, Peconic, about 1900

Quartette I have ever heard; Emery Conklin, first tenor; John F. Brothe, second tenor; Charles H. Tuthill, first bass, and Schuyler B. Horton, second bass.

They were known all over the Island and although each was a man with business responsibilities, they were much in demand and sang in many places. No social or civic event in Greenport was complete without them.

The business and industry of Greenport in this period came from

strawberries. There were nearly two weeks when Long Island berries had the New York market quite alone followed by two weeks when in the Boston market our creps had no competition. During this short season trainloads of berries were shipped via Greenport, and transferred to steamer at Railroad Dock. As the Long Island Railroad was built originally not for Long Island but for the New York-Boston business this was but a brief reversion to old ways.

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**Letters From Our Readers**

Continued From Page 69

icehouses on Silver Lake. I bring to mind C. W. Hartley of the harness shop, Ornin Brown of the tin shop, Andrew Wiggins and Mr. Bates, grocers and especially Henry A. Reeves, editor of the Weekly Republican, the only Democratic paper so far as I remember on the east end of Long Island. As I had been brought up to feel that it was wicked to be a Democrat it was a salutary shock to me to find in Mr. Reeves a "gentleman and a scholar", whom everyone held in high respect. Then there was attorney Benj. H. Reeves who later I believe became County Judge. He was a Republican of course. I do not remember that single Democrat was elected to office in Southold township while I lived there.

May I also mention Will Griffen who was railroad station agent for many years and Deacon Henry W. Mulford of the shipyard.

I am sure that these names will awaken many memories in the minds of your east end readers and may I add with emphasis the old cliché — "those were the good old days".

\* \* \*

**Mariners of Yore**

John Tooker

In the days before the triangular or leg-of-mutton sail made its appearance there was no finer sight to be seen on the water than a large sloop or schooner-yacht under full sail, even to club topsails, and heeling over to the force of a fresh breeze. To see one at a time ought to satisfy one's sense of beauty but to see a hundred or more at one time was a sight to linger in the memory. It was the good fortune of many of Long Island's easterners to witness such a sight in the 1890's when The New York Yacht Club was accustomed to end its annual cruise in Dering Harbor, Shelter Island.

One August day in 1895 The New York Yacht Club was due to sail the last leg of the annual cruise which that year was to be from New London, Conn., to Shelter Island. The day was clear with hardly any wind until late afternoon. By mid-afternoon could be seen from the Main Street dock in Greenport, the sails of many yachts becalmed off Ben's Point, south of Orient. At quitting time in shops and shipyards a fresh south-west breeze had sprung up so we all hurried home, ate a hasty supper, and returned to the dock knowing that we were about to witness a beautiful sight, and we were not disappointed.

During the afternoon several big

Continued on next page

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## Letters From Our Readers

Continued From Page 70

Steamyachts had come in and anchored in Dering Harbor, and by 6 p.m. the big sloops and schooners were approaching the dock, heeling over in the fresh southwest until their lee rails were awash, and with white-clad sailors lying along the weather rails.

Just before reaching the dock the sailors sprang to their feet to man sheets and stays, the beautiful vessels came into the wind, heeled over again and stood for Dering Harbor on the starboard tack. From our vantage point on the dock we had a splendid view of this maneuver which was repeated dozens of times. As each yacht came to anchor she fired a gun and the salute was answered from the Club House at Manhasset.

Dering Harbor was soon filled with over a hundred anchored yachts, and as the sun went down music floated over the water from some of the steam-yachts, ensigns all over the fleet fluttered down, and night signals replaced them. Soon nothing was heard but the ships' bells striking the hours and half hours, a sound that only those who have heard it over the water can appreciate.

Fireworks and dressed ships on the water, a merry round of balls and other social festivities at the Manhasset and Prospect Houses on Shelter Island brought the cruise to an end, most of the yachts departed, and smartly clad yacht captains and stewards disappeared from the streets of Greenport.

Two well known schooner yachts were in the fleet that year, the Coronet and the Dauntless. They had raced across the Atlantic Ocean some time before and the Coronet had won the race.

\* \* \*

### Harpoon Maker's Son

I would greatly miss a copy of the Forum as I find so very many items of personal interest to me. In the January issue Dr. Vail's article on "Sag Harbor's American Hotel" makes me feel homesick, as the hotel and its owner are landmarks in my memory.

Will Young and I attended the Sag Harbor School through all of the grades together, and I recall the wedding of Will to Florence Both, daughter of my Sunday School teacher in the M. E. Church. My hat off and a bouquet to Dr. Vail for his fine rendition of his subject.

I feel quite elated to find my father mentioned by Nancy Byrd Willey on the honorary list under "John Ferdham, Harpoon Maker."

Continued on next page

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**Letters From Our Readers**

Continued from page 71

Congratulations on the fine articles that are in the Forum.  
H. N. Fordham,  
Santa Ana, Cal.

+ + +

**Liked Whaling Story**

I am very pleased with Mary Osborn (Odell) of Wainscott for her whalemen (Feb. Forum), although there's one error—the deep-sea whaleman mentioned on page 35 was Jared Dayton Hedges, brother-in-law of Albert Hand.

I liked the picture of the Old Hampton House at Bridgehampton. It's a pity that cupola has just had to come off because the roof leaks, so Mrs. Caroline Hedges Hopping, the owner, told me.

Jeanette Edwards Ratray,  
East Hampton.

Mrs. Ratray, co-author with her father of "Whale Off!" is now compiling a full-length East Hampton Town history with genealogies of some 40 families there, to come out, it is hoped, late this year. Edi.

+ + +

**Reads Every Word**

The off-shore whaling story by Mary Osborn Odell was so interesting. In fact I read every word of the February Forum with eager interest.

Dr. Turrell's article on the Smithtown Library interested me so much we did some researching and reminiscing about our Cold Spring Harbor Library. Last spring our librarian retired after 40 years of service, but we do not go back as far as Smithtown — only to the 1880's.

Mrs. James L. Newman,  
Cold Spring Harbor.

+ + +

**East Hampton Markers**  
Upton Downs

In the South End cemetery at East Hampton were once, if not now, four red cedar posts. Two were connected with a rail and the other two not. On one post not connected by the rail the initials B. O. were once distinctly traced. No inscription appeared on the other posts. The posts were set at the usual distance of head and foot stones over graves and were thought to have been memorials.

Deacon Recompense Sherrill who always lived at East Hampton, dying about 1836 at the age of 98, four years prior to his death recalled the fragrance of the cedar posts and the rail and described them as bearing at his earliest

Continued on page 77

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## Turtle Inscriptions

Continued from page 64

Albert Albertson who had been dead several years. Here at Ashamomoque, as I see it, really began the settlement of the English part of Long Island in 1638, not at Southold village in 1640.

By unanimous acceptance the white man's history of Shelter Island across the channel from Ashamomoque began with 1652 and of nearby Gardiner's Island with 1639. On the latter island Lyon Gardiner built a manor house; on the other island so did Nathaniel Sylvester. At Ashamomoque one Jackson built a log cabin which Sunderland occupied in 1638.

During the summer of 1885 among thirteen turtles collected by Riley Weeks on the old Miles Weeks homestead at North Babylon was one inscribed C. R. W. 1823, another M. M. 1839, and a third O. R. W. 1860. The initials were those of an uncle, the father and a brother, respectively, of the finder William Weeks. Some of the other turtles he found in 1885 had been inscribed by himself.

In 1882, at Southold Ezra Luckey Boisseau found on his farm a turtle which bore the date 1839 and E. B. the initial's of his father Ezra Boisseau. Ezra was a name handed down through three successive generations of that family. The first Boisseau at Southold was Jean a half-brother to Benjamin L'Hommedieu, grandfather of Ezra L'Hommedieu. Jean Boisseau and Benjamin L'Hommedieu were Huguenot refugees from France. Both settled among the Puritan Englishmen from across the Sound at Southold during the very last years of the 17th century.

The striking name of Luckey was bestowed on the finder of the Boisseau turtle in honor of Rev. Luckey, an itinerant preacher who in the early days of Methodism often stopped at the Boisseau home while riding the North Fork circuit.

Ezra Luckey Boisseau left but one son, Ezra Ernest Boisseau, still living (1951) in the old family house on Boisseau Avenue, until 1850 previously called Skunk's Lane, Methodist Lane and then Greenport Lane. Ezra Ernest Boisseau was my seatmate in the long ago at the public schoolhouse whose site is now occupied by the firehouse.

A turtle bearing the initials of Ezra Luckey Boisseau and the date 1846 together with a legend which indicated that it was again inscribed twenty years later by William A. Williams was picked up in 1878. The finders were Samuel Tuthill and Lester Albertson. The same day Thomas Fleming found in the Albertson orchard at Southold a five dollar bill woven into a robin's nest.

A turtle bearing the date 1849, the year of the Gold Rush, and the initials J. P. W. was found at Southold in 1901 by "Squire" Pike. The initials were probably those of Joseph Parker Wickham.

In July 1907 a turtle with the date 1850 and the initials F.N.T. and J.T.P. was found near the Horton's Point Lighthouse, Southold, by Robert Ebbitts, its keeper, a veteran of the Civil War. The initials were those of Franklin N. Terry and Joshua T. Payne, the latter a former farmer in that immediate vicinity who about 1794 built the Brick Schoolhouse in the village which was sponsored by Regent Ezra L'Hommedieu.

During that year 1850 the main thoroughfare of the village was first turnpiked by Dr. Frank Tuthill, roadmaster. Also that year, a century ago, the village belatedly celebrated for the first time, so far as known, its settlement more than two hundred years earlier.

At Pipe's Neck at Ashamomoque Daniel B. Conklin on Aug. 8, 1858 inscribed that date and his initials on a turtle. In the late 1870s Conklin found the same turtle not ten rods from where he had two decades earlier first made its acquaintance.

A decade after "Squire" Pike had found the Wickham turtle of 1849 on the Payne farm near Horton's point, Southold, T. M. Burke found a turtle marked B. T. Payne 1866. The Civil War was over, Lincoln was no more and Johnson was President. Baldwin T. Payne, grandson of Joshua Payne, above mentioned, had served as a volunteer soldier in the war and had but recently returned home. He afterwards taught in several local schools.

Baldwin Payne during a long life recorded much information about Southold people and houses. To his memorabilia Forum readers are primarily indebted for many facts about Southold, I have perpetuated in its columns. He, David Philander Horton and Augustus Griffin of Orient definitely established the L'Hommedieu residence on the Bay front at the foot of Town

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Harbor Lane. Payne's daughter Grace was another associate of mine at the village school.

At Paradise Point in Southold George H. Wells, son of George C. Wells, another Civil War veteran, in June 1903 found a turtle on the shell of which he had as a lad cut his initials and the year 1874. George H. Wells graduated from the Normal College at Albany, as it was then called, later taught in Southold and eventually became an extensive grower of potatoes. He owned what had been Sam Dickerson's place on Southold's main street, formerly Israel Peck's. Peck planted the trees which until the hurricane of 1938 shaded that thoroughfare. He, Peck, also promoted the opening of the South Road, Route 25, to Greenport.

A huge leatherback turtle which weighed 600 pounds was taken in a pound at East Marion in 1875 by William H. Tuthill. It measured  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet in length and 8 feet across the flippers although 18 inches

had been either bitten off or in some other way removed from the end of one. It was sold for \$25 to Eugene Black-

ford of the Fulton Market who forwarded it to the Smithsonian Institute at Washington.

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**South Bay Bulrushes**

Continued from page 65

dunes. This is particularly demonstrable in holding a boat up to a bay island by hooking an anchor in the bank. Without the webbing of the roots the merest tug on the anchor cable might ease the anchor up and out of the mud. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to dig through the roots with an ordinary spade. An ax is much more practical and useful for the job.

To those with little botanical training — and some with much — the sedges and rushes may look a great deal alike. They frequently grow side by side and run together. Then, too, their commercial uses often overlap.

*Juncus effusus* and *Scirpus lacustris* both seem to have been used to make rush bottoms for chairs, although the latter probably lasted longer being coarser and stronger. Usually one of the members of the *Scirpus* family along with certain reeds was used in thatching a roof.

A very old way of making candles dipped the pith of rushes instead of string into the melted wax. The pith had to be most carefully removed from the sheath of leaves in order to remain in one single piece for dipping.

The *Typha*, cat-tails, is the most familiar of the four plants, the so-called bulrushes. It is a common inhabitant of Long Island waterways. The brown spike which gives the plant its name is actually the flower and the fruit bearer.

In the late spring and very early summer the spike has an elongation above the brown part. This additional section is the male portion of the plant. Down from it showers the pollen onto the female members in the characteristic brown cat-tail to assist in the fertilization and production of the seed. The male portion usually dries and breaks off before the seed matures.

The separation of the reproductive parts of a plant is

one of nature's tricks. Oak trees have the male and the female organs on the same tree but in different flowers. Holly provides a male tree and a female tree, two individual trees. Apples put the two organs in the one flower. Lady

Slippers, too, place the two parts in the same flower but so arranged that the pollen should not fertilize that particular flower.

It seems to me that cat-tails show a feature in which humans again get out of step

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Long Island Birdlife is compiled by Edwin Way Teale, nationally known authority; the island's mammals, by Dr. W. J. Hamilton, Cornell zoologist. The most extensive coverage of the island's Indians ever printed was prepared by John H. Morice. Among the authors represented are J. Russel Sprague, Dr. Oscar G. Darlington, Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood, Miss Jacqueline Overton, Rev. John K. Sharp, Chester R. Blakelock, Osborn Shaw, Herbert F. Ricard, Preston R. Bassett, Robert R. Coles, Halsey B. Knapp, Nancy Boyd Willey, Mary E. Bell—in all more than forty such authorities.

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with nature. We know that many insect sounds and noises are beyond the hearing range of our ears; the same as our feeling some organ tones rather than hearing them. Frequently flowers such as cat-tails, golden rod, and asters have no apparent smell for us. Could not this be due, likewise, to their odor falling beyond the limited range of our nose?

Most every flower has adapted itself for fertilization by one particular insect transporting the necessary pollen. The insect to bring about fertilization of the buttercup is not the one to work fertilization of the lady slipper. The insect fertilizing a dogwood blossom is not functioning in like capacity in the tulip tree. I do not know which insect takes care of the cat-tails but I plan to find out this coming season.

Phragmites is the reed with the plume at the top, and growing rank and thick over Long Island's lowlands. One of its best-known locations is beside the parkways to Jones Beach and along the bay side of the beach.

No one appears in a position to say, "This is how and when Plume Grass seed came to Long Island." Apparently it has been here a very, very long time buried beneath the surface. When the meadows have been dug into or the bay bottom dredged up, the seed has been exposed to the air. It dried, warmed, and germinated.

There is a bit of argument concerning the fertility of plume grass seed produced locally. Some students are of the opinion that the seed is sterile due to an undetermined factor which is not a limiting factor in the native home of the grass. Others feel that it is fertile seed but only so, perhaps, for an hour or two. Within a sort time a line of experiments may be run to learn the truth of this point.

Surely in Great South Bay plume grass needs no fertile seed as it is fast taking over

everywhere, spreading by means of a root system which runs out twenty-five to fifty feet in a single season and can produce new growth above ground every foot of the way.

Plume grass grows most luxuriantly and densely at or immediately above our water level. No other plants seem able to compete with it and survive. An exception might be made here as trees do manage to hold their own with plume grass provided they are taller than Phragmites, when it arrives. This is surely the bull-rush if there ever was one—strong, robust, aggressive and overpowering!

At the beginning of this piece I told of the sixty-two persons questioned concerning bulrushes associated with the Moses story. To be absolutely certain of the identity of the Moses bulrushes and regardless of statements in two reliable dictionaries, I wrote to the American Museum of Natural History for the name of those bulrushes.

The museum answered: "The bulrushes of Moses were a sedge (*Cyperus Papyrus*), the original source of 'paper.' In eastern United States the name 'Bulrush' is usually applied by botanists to the large species of *Scirpus*."

The common name of the old Egyptian "paper" is, of course, the second word of the scientific name, "papyrus"—one of the sedges. I do not suppose we have anything on Long Island which resembles the papyrus for it requires a warmer climate, warmer water

and richer soil than Long Island has to offer.

Anyhow the church school superintendent of an earlier generation knew that the bulrushes of the infant Moses were the ancient papyrus.

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## Letters From Our Readers

Continued from page 72

recollection the same worn appearance that they did in his old age.

The initials B.O. were probably marks for the grave of either Bezaleel or his brother Recompense Osborn, sons of William Osborn who was at Salem, Mass. in 1639 and whose widow married John Mulford of East Hampton.

Recompense Osborn was born May 26, 1644 and Bezaleel, May 8, 1650. Recompense graduated from Harvard College, taught at New Haven and came to East Hampton and is believed to have died after 1665, probably before his brother Bezaleel whose will was proved in Suffolk County, Feb. 10, 1686. Bezaleel's wife Elizabeth appears to have been a Howell. The earmark of his cattle on Montauk was "2 slits Crosse way or, the fore part the left ear and A halfe penie under the right eare."

According to the will of Bezaleel, he and Recompense had brothers Joseph and Jonathan. Jonathan removed to Cape May, N. J. before 1690 and Joseph in whose house Bezaleel's will was proved died in 1741 aged about 90.

\* \* \*

### New Hempstead, N. Y.

Clarence Russell Comes

An off-island place settled by Long Islanders many years prior to the Revolution is New Hempstead, located in the lovely hills of Rockland County, New York. It is an apple growing country as attested by the name of the next hamlet, Pomona. This whole region, including the neighboring county of Bergen, New Jersey, was settled by sturdy Holland Dutch who spoke their native language only and when several English families emigrated from the plains of Hempstead, Long Island, to the new location in the Kakiat Patent as it was known, it may be they were not very favorably received by the Dutch. At any rate they established themselves and called the place New Hempstead. One of these families bore the familiar Long Island name of Conkling (Conklin).

These people built a Presbyterian church in 1734. It was known as the English Church because in no other for many miles around was the preaching done in English. After many years this original church was burned and a new one, which is still in use, erected in 1826. Part of the timbers saved from the old church were used in building the new. It is still widely known as the English Church.

There is much of historic interest in this region. Here in the original church Major Andre was im-

prisoned for a time before being taken to Tappan, about eight miles distant. From the time of Andre's arrest until his execution he was in the custody of Major Benjamin Tallmadge, native of Setauket and chief of Washington's secret service.

In a family burying ground near New Hempstead there are several graves of soldiers of the Revolution which have been recently properly marked by Shatemue Chapter of the D.A.R.

### \* \* \* Whitman Influence

I was much interested in Martha K. Hall's note on Whitman and Smuts, whose great book, *Holism* was probably influenced by Walt. In it he marshals the current scientific evidence to prove that the universe is a scene of wholeness—Whitman's "clutched together."

It is very probable that Smuts

influenced Woodrow Wilson in the latter's effort to establish the League of Nations. And in the early days of the New Deal, it was commonly said that Franklin D. Roosevelt was aiming to realize the America Walt celebrated. John Dewey, the philosopher of democracy, somewhere defines Walt's America as "all communicating with all". Writing in 1911, and I quote, he said: "Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Maeterlinck are thus far, perhaps, the only men who have been habitually, and, as it were, instinctively aware that democracy is neither a form of government nor a social expediency, but a metaphysic of the relation of man and his experience to nature."

At our Poetry Group meeting, November 25, we read Whitman's own review of his *Leaves of Grass*

Continued on Page 78



Christ's First Presbyterian Church, Hempstead, L. I., Mother Church of the  
One at New Hempstead.

**Flies Were In Fashion**

With button collecting now second only to stamps, many beautiful and odd old buttons long concealed in attics have come out of hiding. An exhibit was staged last month in the galleries of the Traphagen School of Fashion, New York, by the Metropolitan Button Club so that students of the school might have an opportunity to study the rare buttons.

Insect designs were a popular fancy of Victorian days, and the fly button seen here, from the Trap-



hagen School's own collection, was one of the most unusual in the show. A true-to-life metallic housefly is mounted on a mother-of-pearl shank button with silver filigree edge. Perfection in detail is one of the mottoes at Traphagen, so that emphasis on choice of buttons is right in line with the fine discrimination taught there. Donna Marxer, one of the school's students, models the original gown on which these insect buttons were used, and shows how the little flies parade down the front of the bodice.

The dress is from the school's museum — a quaint example of the 1880's.

Proof that the insect motif still has followers comes out in a 1952 gold brooch and ear clips with a



gold fly perched on each — and the millinery fad of "a bee on your bonnet" a year or two ago.

**Letters From Our Readers**

Continued from Page 77

in the *New York Times* of 1866, and it was observed by someone that Whitman was the prophet of the entire modern movement in painting, literature, political theory, etc. No one disagreed.

This silent, slow permeating of a whole mental climate, which it has been Walt's office to perform, is so much the time in which we live that there is slight perspective on it. The most comparable instance is that of Shakespeare's influence—and Walt himself drew that parallel.

I should like to see a whole number of the Forum devoted to Walt. "Allons; after the Great Companions; and to belong to them!"

George R. Van Allen,  
Malverne Historian.

\* \* \*

**Monitor Anniversary**

The 9th of March was the 90th anniversary of the "Battle of the Iron Ships" in Hampton Roads in 1862, wherein the unknown and untried little "cheese box on a raft" made her dramatic and timely appearance to meet and drive back the dreaded Merrimac. Every now

and then some new light appears on the Long Island built Monitor.

Today we have machine shops and foundries that can turn out almost any thing. This was not so in 1862. The twenty-foot turret of the Monitor had to be machined to a perfect round fit. The only machine in the country big enough to do this job was an English-made lathe in a shop at Manchester, N. H. That was where the job was done.

Governor Dewey proclaimed March 9th as "John Ericsson Day". This remarkable man was a practical genius. At the age of 9 he had invented a pump, at 13 he was in charge of a force of 600 men on the Grand Canal in Sweden. One of his greatest works was perfecting the screw propeller which has meant so much to ocean and air travel.

James E. Tooker,  
Town Clerk, Babylon.

\* \* \*

**The Forum a "Must"**

We have been located here in our own home since I retired from active service with the Society to Maintain Public Decency, just about a year ago. We find the Long Island Forum is a "must".

Continued on back cover

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### Letters From Our Readers

Continued From Page 78

Congratulations on its continued well-deserved popularity.

John S. Sumner,  
Fort Pierce, Florida.

Mr. Sumner, under whose leadership the Society became a mighty factor in its worthwhile cause, is a son of the late Admiral George W. Sumner, one time resident of Patchogue.

+ + +

#### Forum In School

I teach a little Long Island history to my Sixth Grade at West End School in Lynbrook, and for a general knowledge of historical Long Island facts your magazine appeals to me.

(Miss) June E. Senn,  
Malverne

+ + +

#### A SECOND PRINTING

A second printing of "In Old Southampton" by the late Abigail Fithian Halsey has been issued. Local Official Historian W. K. Dunwell in his introduction dedicates the reprinting to the memory of the author whose work originally appeared in 1940. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy should address Mr. Dunwell at Southampton.

+ \* +



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